

KENDRICK PARK DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 13, 2011 – 7:00 PM
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peg Roberts, Marilyn Rodzwell, Alan Snow and Christina Mata

MEMBERS ABSENT: Peter Blier, Liz Rosenberg, Hope Crolius, Susan Sheldon

STAFF PRESENT: Dave Ziomek, Director, Conservation and Development;
Linda Chalfant, Director, LSSE;
Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

1. **Announcements** – none
2. **Election of Officers** - none
3. **Minutes** – no vote was taken on the Minutes.
4. **Program** – Ms. Brestrup reviewed the Park Program, dated January 4, 2011, that was prepared by The Cecil Group and was presented by them at the KPDAC meeting on January 6, 2011. There was discussion about skateboarding. Ms. Mata noted that skateboarders like to skate wherever they can. There is no need to build something especially for skateboarders. Other members of the group commented that there may be places where we want to prevent skateboarding. Ms. Mata noted that in Central Park in New York City bikers, joggers and in-line skaters share the roadways.

Ms. Roberts stated that there is an informal ice-skating rink at the Florence Community Center. She suggested that other members of the committee take a look at it.

Ms. Roberts also reminded the group of the connection that Amherst has to Japan through William Clark. Professor Clark of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (now UMass) imported plants from Japan and made many contacts there. The Cecil Group was told about this connection. There may be ways to incorporate a reference to Japan in the design of the park – through outdoor structures with architectural references to Japan or through use of plants that are native to Japan.

Ms. Mata noted that there is a lot of pedestrian traffic at the intersection of Triangle Street and East Pleasant Street. Much of this pedestrian traffic comes from the High School. With this in mind, it would not be a good idea to block off that corner. Creating a welcoming entry to the park there would be appropriate, but the entry might take into account the need to shield the park from the commercial views and vehicular traffic at the corner.

There was discussion about the need for seating at the northwestern end of the park. The landscape architecture students at UMass had mentioned the need for seating at that corner, so that they can wait for their friends on the way into town. Mr. Snow noted that there is a triangle of land across North Pleasant Street that is owned by the town, but that is somewhat neglected.

There was discussion about parking. Parking on the west side of North Pleasant Street, across from the park, is disrupted by driveways. It would be better to have parking on the east side. There was general agreement that parking along the east side of North Pleasant Street, along the park edge, was a good idea. There was also general agreement that we

should explore making that portion of North Pleasant Street one-way, going in a northerly direction.

5. **Conceptual Plans** – The group reviewed the three conceptual plans that had been presented by The Cecil Group on January 6th.

Concept Plan “A”

In Concept Plan “A” (paths and north/south circulation) the group noted that it would be hard to leave the park in an east-west direction if a problem arose. All circulation runs north-south in this plan. There was general agreement that planting trees on the east side of East Pleasant Street (along Bertucci’s property frontage) was a good idea. However, the Tree Warden, Alan Snow, noted that there are overhead utilities along that stretch of road which would need to be put underground if street trees are to thrive in that location. There was discussion about putting the utilities along North Pleasant Street underground as well.

Ms. Chalfant noted that the ice-skating area should be located in a place that’s not too sunny, or the ice will melt. The group acknowledged that ice-skating areas take maintenance, staff time and money.

In Concept Plan “A” the children’s’ area is too close to North Pleasant Street traffic. This would be a hard place to keep track of children, Ms. Roberts noted. The entry, combined with the bus stop, is not well-shaped and doesn’t seem welcoming. It doesn’t open into the park. Cross flow of pedestrian traffic is missing. There are exiting desire lines that will be informally recreated across the park, if this concept is chosen.

The group liked the idea, mentioned last time by the consultants, of bringing artwork into the play area.

Concept Plan “B”

In Concept Plan “B” (places and spaces) the group thought that there were many positive things about this plan. However, there may be too many spaces shown. Perhaps one of the spaces could be eliminated. Also the location of the play area and the performance space should be switched. The play area should be in a more sheltered location. The group didn’t like the idea of having to walk through the play area to get to other areas of the park. They liked the multiple circulation paths and thought that this plan provided good north-south as well as east-west circulation. Several members of the group expressed preference for this plan.

Ms. Mata expressed approval for the southern entry space in this plan. She said that this plan is “striking”. It reflects a transition from urban spaces at the southern end to more rural spaces at the northern end. She particularly liked the southern, triangular space. This plan lends itself to many events that could occur at the same time. Mr. Snow commented that the amount of hardscape in Plan “B” could be lessened. Perhaps one of the paved areas could be removed. There was general agreement that the northern green space could be made larger by eliminating one of the walkways around the edge and replacing it with a wall, perhaps on the west side. Ms. Mata agreed that one of the spaces could be removed from Plan “B”. She also suggested incorporating a trellis or structure into Plan “B”. She likes the grade change from north to south in the existing park and doesn’t want to lose it.

Mr. Snow expressed concern for maintenance issues related to Plan “B”. It will require a lot of trimming and edging which can’t be done by a big machine, he said.

Concept Plan “C”

In Concept Plan “C” (east/west circulation, maintain terracing) the group thought that the northern location of the play area was too far away from the center of town. They were concerned that the stage for the performance space was too close to the noise on East Pleasant Street. Ms. Roberts pointed out that a performance space could also be a play space for children when it is not in use as a performance space. Children could run up and down the slope or seating and chase each other around the space. She referred to the outdoor amphitheater at Swarthmore College. Ms. Roberts stated that the pergola in the center of this plan could be used for a stage or for sitting to watch playing or skating in the lower area. Ms. Rodzwell suggested that an improvement to this plan would be to move the play area to a location just north of the performance space step seating.

General Comments

Ms. Brestrup commented that the 250th Anniversary Committee had recently voted to donate its leftover funds to Kendrick Park and to designate the funds for the purchase of benches, which would have a plaque in remembrance of the 250th Anniversary. There is about \$14,000 in this fund.

There was discussion about whether this money should be transferred into the Kendrick Park fund that has been set up for donations. There was also discussion about whether the standard downtown benches would be appropriate for Kendrick Park. The group acknowledged that the downtown benches, with recycled plastic slats, get mildewed, deform in the summer heat and are subject to staining with grease.

Ms. Mata stated that the benches in Kendrick Park need to look beautiful. She referred to the “Worlds’ Fair” benches in Central Park as well as other wooden (mahogany?) and cast iron benches in Central Park that are beautiful and stand up to heavy urban use.

Ms. Roberts agreed that the benches for Kendrick Park need to be durable and not likely to be wrecked by people who do destructive things. The park should be designed to discourage and withstand vandalism.

Ms. Roberts noted that significant areas of perennial plantings would not be maintained. She recommended planting flowering shrubs in mulched beds, which are easier to care for than perennials. The Garden Club has a hard time maintaining the spaces to which they are already committed.

Mr. Snow suggested that garden businesses may be willing to adopt areas of the park for care and maintenance, similar to the island in the center of the North Amherst intersection.

Ms. Roberts reminded the group that members of the 250th Anniversary Committee would like to plant more daffodils in Kendrick Park. Guilford Mooring had said in the past that these are not difficult to deal with in terms of maintenance. Mr. Snow and Ms. Rodzwell suggested that smaller bulbs, crocuses and hyacinths, could be planted, too.

Ms. Chalfant would like to see a location for bocce courts somewhere in the park. Mr. Ziomek suggested looking at the bocce courts at Forest Park in Springfield.

Mr. Ziomek asked about the idea of acknowledging the presence of Tan Brook. Concept Plan “C” shows a Tan Brook “Trace” in the vicinity of the underground brook. Mr. Ziomek recommended that the chosen plan deal with the volume of water that comes over the curb and bubbles up through the surface. In other words, until the problem is solved, we shouldn’t build anything in the Tan Brook area that could be damaged by being flooded with water and

sediment. Mr. Snow noted that Plan “B” has some hardscape in the vicinity of Tan Brook. This would be impacted by overflow from the brook.

There was a discussion of maintenance issues.

Mr. Ziomek brought up the issue of “understory” plantings. Understory is helpful in creating spaces, he said. Good designers can design low maintenance understory plantings.

Mr. Snow noted that turf is really high maintenance. Beds with mulch are lower maintenance.

Mr. Ziomek suggested that in addition to large trees, we should consider planting lower, flowering trees and flowering shrubs.

Ms. Roberts reported that the park in Keene, N.H., had rhododendron, laurel and winterberry for its shrub plantings. She asked if we really wanted a fountain at the southern tip of the park, since we already have a fountain in Sweetser Park, which requires a lot of maintenance.

Mr. Ziomek suggested using art in the park. Sculpture is attractive and requires less maintenance than plantings. He suggested that people may be willing to donate art to the park.

Mr. Snow stated that the concrete pad for the existing sculpture at the north end of the park detracts from the sculpture.

There was a question about where funds come from for public art in town.

There was discussion about connecting the park to areas beyond the park boundary.

Mr. Ziomek suggested that we think about the amphitheater. It needs to be attractive and low maintenance when not in use. He asked what types of performances would go on there, given the noise from East Pleasant Street. Ms. Chalfant noted that the traffic noise is quieter in summer, when outdoor performances would occur.

There was general agreement that we should look into making North Pleasant Street one way, with parking on one side. This would be good for pedestrian safety and movement. People could get out of their cars and go directly into the park, without crossing the street.

6. **Recommendations to design consultants in preparation for January 27th meeting** – see above
7. **New Business** – none
8. **Future Meetings** – not discussed
9. **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine M. Brestrup, Senior Planner